DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 248 458 CS 007 677

AUTHOR De Santi, Roger J.
TITLE Perspectives on the Research and Purposes of Reading Comprehension Study Skills and Techniques.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Journal Articles (080) -- Information Analyses (070)
JOURNAL CIT Forum for Reading; v15 n1 p10-16 Fall-Win 1983

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; Program Effectiveness; *Reading Comprehension; Reading Improvement; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Processes; *Reading Programs; *Reading Research; Remedial Reading; Research

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose for reading is to derive the meaning of an author's message, which has been transmitted through print, as it relates to the reader's personal need to go from a point of lesser to greater information. Within the college reading improvement program, the many purposes surrounding reading should intersect to form the basis for improving students' comprehension and study skills. Teachers can help students to deal with and understand four perspectives of intention or purpose. The first is determining the author's intention. The second is the teacher's purpose. The third and fourth are the instruction in and opportunity for practice of reading comprehension, with materials commensurate with the student's maturity level. These four perspectives cross both basic and applied research needs in comprehension assessment techniques, methods, and materials. Two researchers have summarized the reading research of the 1970s as being predominantly oriented toward basic research in reading as a process at the expense of applied reading research. Another study has indicated that few college reading instructors felt that reading research contributes a great deal to college reading programs. However, the teaching of reading improvement cannot and has not waited for the necessary applied research to be conducted. Those who need information from applied research are in the best position to formulate their own questions and set about obtaining the answers. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organizat originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED248458

Perspectives on the Research and Purposes of Reading Comprehension Study Skills and Techniques

Roger J. De Santi

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Rona F. Flippo
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS007677

Perspectives on the research and purposes of reading comprehension study skills and techniques

Roger J. De Santi
University of New Orleans
New Orleans, Louisiana

The overall purpose of reading is to derive the meaning of an author's message which has been transmitted through print. The reasons for which people read may be divided between obtaining information about and dealing with their environment and obtaining a form of entertainment and leisure-time activity. Regardless of which of these they choose, the primary purpose of the reader ought to be to understand the author's message as related to the reader's personal need to go from a point of lesser to greater information.

Comprehension, the understanding of an author's message, is fundamental to the nature of reading and as such has been the focal point of many theories and opinions. One common technique for distinguishing among these has been to classify theories as being either bottom-up or top-down in their orientation. Those which are bottom-up focus on an accumulation of mastered skills intended to lead to reading fluency. Those which are top-down have focused on immersing the student in language activities which are perceived to be related to reading. Critics of these approaches have noted that a bottom-up approach may lead to a reader who is well versed in skills but does not integrate these skills to arrive at a process of interacting with the author's message. Those who have reviewed the top-down approach have stated that it may lead to readers who are aware of the primary purpose of reading but who are weak or deficient in skills.

As a result of these two theories, and their criticisms, many practitioners have been inclined to amalgamate the two. These attempts to capitalize on the assets of each have been orientated toward word identification skills and the interactive nature of reading. The use of the word interactive implies both communication and action. The communication portion stresses that a person, the author, has tried to say something through the use of the printed word and that the reader is to attempt to understand it. The active portion indicates that a reader cannot be passive in arriving at the author's message. As the words are on the page before the reader they are static and it is the reader's task to bring meaning to them. As readers attempt this task they have as tools an awareness of the syntax and semantics of our language. In dealing with each of these, both the author and the reader rely on their previous knowledge. This previous knowledge is frequently referred to as experiential background, and schema theory has attempted to explain how these experiences are organized.

Within the college reading improvement program many of the purposes referred to and implied above should intersect to form the basis for improving students' reading comprehension study skills. Essentially, we can assist students to deal with and understand four perspectives of intention or purpose. The first has been referred to and includes determining the author's purpose or intention. Students should be taught and encouraged to raise and answer questions such as: Why did the author write this information? From the author's point of view, what am I to

gain as a result of reading this information? The second perspective of intention or purpose focuses on the course instructor and presents questions such as: Why has a particular text been chosen and why has a particular reading assignment been given? The third and fourth perspectives combine within the college reading improvement program itself in that they include the interactions of the program's instructor and the student. As instructors we must provide instruction in and opportunity for practice of reading comprehension study skills. While pursuing the many varied techniques which are available, it is necessary to keep in mind that the method of presentation and the nature of the materials presented should be commensurate with the maturity level of the student.

These four perspectives of intention or purpose cross both basic and applied research needs in assessment techniques, methods, and materials as related to college reading improvement programs. In their recent guest editorial Vacca and Vacca (1983) summarized the reading research of the 1970's as being predominantly oriented toward basic research in the study of reading as a process at the expense of applied reading research. From this summation they concluded that: (a) researchers did a fairly good job of building and verifying theories of the reading process, (b) reading instruction research has been de-valued, and (c) multidisciplinary research has diminished the role of the reading educator in research efforts. The efforts of recent research come closer to home when the results of the Berg et al (1983) study are considered in tandum with the Vaccas' statements. Persons identified as being associated with college reading programs were surveyed as to the contribution of reading research to college reading programs. The survey focused on the relation of the amount of significant research which has been found available to skills selection, methods selection, use of management systems, and the effectiveness of college reading improvement programs. Table 1 presents a summary of the findings reported as converted to means and grand means representing the extent to which research is related to college reading program components.

Table 1

Means and Grand Means of Extent to which Research is Related to College Reading Program Components as Derived from Berg et al 1983

	A great deal	Some	Very little	I don't know	No response
Skills	17%	45%	19%	2%	17%
Vocabulary methods	13%	38%	36%	10%	5%
Comprehension methods	16%	33%	35%	9%	8%
Rate methods	9%	25%	25%	8%	33%
Management systems	8%	23%	31%	15%	23%
Program effectiveness	6%	44%	39%	6%	6%
Grand means	11%	34%	31%	8%	15%

The percentages reported in Table 1 are means calculated from the data provided in the study. The study itself should be referred to for response percentages for each topic within each questionnaire area. By calculating grand means a general indication of the usefulness of reading research for college reading personnel can be derived. Overall, only 11 percent of the respondents felt that reading research contributed "a great deal" to college reading programs. The mediocre categories of "some" and "very little," when combined, accounted for 65 percent of the responses. Not knowing and not responding accounted for 8 and 15 percent respectively. By combining these findings with the summary and conclusions of the Vaccas' there arises before us a great need for quality research which is applicable toward college reading programs. Based on the grand means, reported in Table 1, prioritized generalized research questions can be generated. Using the lowest percentage through to the highest under the "great deal" rating, research needs can be rank ordered as: Can we prove that:

1. college students who are poor readers improve their chances of higher academic grades by taking a course in reading improvement?
2. the use of management systems in college reading programs is warranted?
3. methods for rating training are effective and warranted?
4. methods for teaching vocabulary can be differentiated, are effective, and are warranted?
5. methods for teaching comprehension can be differentiated, are effective, and are warranted?
6. there are skills which should be taught at the college level and that there is an appropriate sequencing of these skills?

While this rank ordering is the apparent result of the respondents' beliefs of the availability of significant research with the greatest need listed first, viewing the list from the bottom up offers an encouraging analysis. As discussed above, comprehension and the skills contributing to comprehension should be of paramount importance. With the two areas of comprehension and skills holding the bottom of the list it appears that to date the greatest perceived research efforts have gone toward the research needs perceived to be the greatest. While this matching of need and effort is an encouraging trend, the data indicative of the trend is not in and of itself as optimistic when we note that the highest rating in the "great deal" category was only 17 percent. The apparent inference is that although efforts to date may be commendable there is still a large need for significant research in many areas. Alternatively, it must be considered that appropriate research may have been conducted and the survey's respondents were not familiar with the information. If this is the case, efforts may need to be directed toward dissemination and implementation.

Of course, the teaching of reading improvement cannot and has not waited for the necessary applied research to be conducted, reported, and implemented. As reading improvement programs continue the development of reading comprehension study skills and techniques they can actively engage in activities which will offset many of the inferences drawn from the Vacca and Berg writings. Within these programs there is the ready opportunity to conduct applied research directed toward the needs implied in the Berg study and at the same time displace the Vaccas' conclusions and reestablish the value of reading instruction research and the role of the reading educator in research efforts. Those interested in researching assessment techniques can find a comprehensive guide to

Table 2
Index of Reading Comprehension Study Skills

	DRCD	ES	F	GF	H	HJ	HHR	HSa	HSb	K	KKL	LF	MP	MS	ORS	TRD	Z
Alphabetizing								360									
Categorizing							221								206		
Cause/Effect					312												
Characterization												250		255			271
Classification					308	161								255			270
Comparing																	255
Conceptualization												251		255			254
Concluding	229				349							189					
Details	222				299	154		339	488		125						
Directions	222	224			314			343	492		124			254			268
Evaluating	230													255			269
Fact/Opinion					313									257			
Generalizing	229				349							251		256			
Glossaries										339							
Guide Words					310										207		
Imagery		223			350										207		
Indexes								382									
Infering															209		
Interpretation														256			270
Locating Info										334				253	210		
Main Idea	22[illegible]					162	215		496	328		220		270	205		
Outlining/					299	159		335	488		124			254			268
Notetaking					304	161	219	387	498			213		277	215	55	
Phrasing	233	222							470			215					
Predicting	230							340				191		256			271
Pronunciation															207		
Propaganda					332							194		258			
Punctuation									474								
Rate	238						217	350	191					268			
Scanning															202		
Sentences	234					157		336	488			215					
Sequence		225			313	161		339	491	337	125	251		254			255
Signal Words		213															
Skimming								337	487						202		274
Summarizing	227				304	162		385	498					279			
Surveying																56	
Table of Contents															209		
Test Taking			1	1									1				

Table 3

Index of Reading Comprehension Study Techniques

	B	DRCD	ES	FM	GT	H	HJ	HRR	HSa	HSb	KKL	LF	ORS	TRD	Z
Directed Reading	94				218				346		127	188			
Guide-O-Rama														55	
Herringbone														55	
Instructional frameworks														55	
Pattern Guides					219										
PQRST	107			205											
Previewing						288									
Questioning		222	212	154		311			338	483					255
Request			215		219							188			
SQ3R	107		216	198			164	218				219	204	56	259
SQRQCQ	107			210											
Structured overviews					221									55	
Study Guides														55	

postsecondary reading tests in Gordon's (1983) work and the description of a recently developed cloze-based reading inventory in De Santi's (1982) writings. For those wishing to explore reading comprehension postsecondary reading tests in Gordon's (1983) work and the description of a recently developed cloze-based reading inventory in De Santi's study skills and/or techniques, Tables 2 and 3 may be used as beginning points. Table 2 presents 37 skills referenced across 17 readily available sources. Table 3 presents 13 study techniques referenced across 15 readily available sources. The skills and techniques presented in each table are alphabetically listed and the sources are indexed by the first letter(s) of the last name(s) of the author cited in the reference list of this article. The number at each intersection point is the page number of the referenced material on which a skill or technique is first presented.

If comprehension pervades the reading process and reading instruction, if the Vaccas' conclusions are justified, and if the means and grand means presented above can be accepted as indicative of research needs; then the consumers of applied research should become the generators of applied research. Those of us who need the information are in the best position to formulate the questions and set about obtaining their answers. While waiting for the results of others' research has been less than satisfactory, the opportunity to meet one's own needs is encouraging.

References

Berg, P. C., Hess III, R. K., & Crocker, A. The contribution of reading research to college reading programs. *Forum for Reading*, 1983, *14*(1), 17-29.

Burmeister, L. E. *Reading strategies for middle and secondary school teachers* (2nd ed.). Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978.

Dallmann, M., Rouch, R. L., Char, L. Y. C., & Deboer, J. J. *The teaching of reading* (5th ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

De Santi, R. J. Assessing comprehension in college reading improvement programs: The Cloze Reading Inventory. In *Innovative learning strategies*. Rona Flippo (ed). 5th Yearbook of College Reading Improvement. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1982.

Ekwall, E. E., & Shanker, J. L. *Diagnosis and remediation of the disabled reader* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1983.

Flippo, R. F. *Testwiseness*. Rehoboth, MA: Twin Oaks Publishing, 1984.

Forgan, H. W., & Mangrum, C. T. *Teaching content area reading skills* (2nd ed.). Columbus: Merrill, 1981.

Gifford, C. S., & Fluitt, J. L. *Test-taking made easier: How to win the testing race*. Danville, IL: Interstate Printers & Publishers, 1981.

Gillet, J. W., & Temple, C. *Understanding reading problems: Assessment and instruction*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982.

Gordon, B. A guide to postsecondary reading tests. *Reading World*, 1983, *23*(1), 45-53.

Hafner, L. E., & Jolly, H. B. *Patterns of teaching reading in the elementary school*. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Hall, M. A., Ribovich, J. K., & Ramig, C. J. *Reading and the elementary school child* (2nd ed.). New York: Van Nostrand, 1979.

a Harris, A. J., & Sipay, E. R. *How to teach reading: A competency-based program*. New York: Longman, 1979.

b Harris, A. J., & Sipay, E. R. *How to increase reading ability* (7th ed.). New York: Longman, 1980.

Howards, M. *Reading diagnosis and instruction: An integrated approach*. Reston: Reston Publishing Company, 1980.

Kennedy, E. C. *Classroom approaches to remedial reading* (2nd ed.). Itasca: Peacock, 1977.

Kirk, S. A., Kliebhan, J. M., & Lerner, J. W. *Teaching reading to slow and disabled learners*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978.

Lapp, D., & Flood, J. *Teaching reading to every child (2nd ed.). New York: Macmillan, 1983.*

McGinnis, D. J., & Smith, D. E. Analyzing and treating reading problems. New York: Macmillan, 1982.

Millman, J., & Pauk, W. *How to take tests*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969.

Otto, W., Rude, R., & Spiegel, D. L. *How to teach reading*. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

Tierney, R. J., Readence, J. E., & Dishner, E. K. *Reading strategies and practices: A guide for improving instruction*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980.

Vacca, R. T., & Vacca, J. L. Guest editorial: Two less than fortunate consequences of reading research in the 1970's. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 1983, *18*(4), 382-383.

Zintz, M. V. *Corrective reading* (4th ed.). Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown, 1981.